

The Paper

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Free

WorldBriefs

Human Rights Watch concern for fate of Palestinians

Feb 14 - Human Rights Watch today expressed grave concern at Monday's deadly attack by Israeli soldiers on a minibus carrying Palestinian workers to their jobs. The attack killed twenty-year-old Ziad Abu Swayyeh and injured several other workers, one seriously. Since the current period of unrest began in late September, Israel has repeatedly rebuffed calls to investigate incidents involving allegedly excessive or indiscriminate use of deadly force against Palestinians. Human Rights Watch also deplored the killing on Sunday night of thirty-five year old Tsahi Sasson, as he drove along a road near the Israeli settlement of Gilo, and called on the Palestinian Authority to investigate and prosecute those responsible in accordance with internationally accepted fair trial standards. The organization expressed concern at the continuing Israeli policy of "liquidation" of Palestinians who it claims are responsible for planning or carrying out attacks on Israeli soldiers or settlers. The Israeli government claim that such killings were legitimate acts of war, but it has not made public any information to substantiate the claim that the targeted individuals were responsible for violent attacks or the claim that Israel had no alternative in order to save lives.

Fisheries Declining Around the Globe
Feb 14 (ENS) - Fish populations around the world are in a continuing decline, prompted by rising fish catches, consumption and trade, a new report by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

Sustaining the earth, Sustaining the people

Australian Agriculture in the 21st Century

The Kyoto Agreement on Climate Change has put the move to sustainable farming practices high on its list of priorities, but Australia has done little to address these issues.

FAITH THOMAS

According to a report released recently by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), current agricultural practices are placing a heavy burden on our environment and jeopardizing the world's ability to feed its growing populations. In our efforts to produce more food per hectare, we are degrading our soils, draining our aquifers, polluting our drinking water, and causing the loss of both terrestrial and aquatic animal and plant species.

Agriculture in Australia is a hugely environmentally destructive process as it now stands, estimated to cause more than 30 times as much degradation as mining, as it involves clearing large tracts of land, sterilising the soil with pesticides and leaving the land bare for long periods of time. This inevitably leads to wide spread erosion, salinity and infertility.

In order to counter this we apply large amounts of heavily concentrated, water-soluble fertilizers. Most of this does not remain in the soil, but drains though to the water table or into the rivers, killing fish and contributing to the rapid growth of toxic

blue green algae.

On top of this we have the problem of grazing. Australia has particularly dry and infertile soils with a fragile structure that cannot cope with the continual tread of heavy hooves. In many areas there are several months of the year in which the ground is covered only by sparse patches of clumping grasses. These conditions are ideal for soft padded animals such as kangaroos but completely inappropriate for hooved animals. Hoofed animals compact the soil destroying its structure, erode hillsides and the banks of creeks and rivers and in drought-stricken outback areas, denude the land completely so that the soil becomes dust and blows away in the wind.

Agriculture also plays a large part in the production of greenhouse gases, both through the clearing of forests that are natural reservoirs of carbon dioxide, and through the cattle industries that are notorious producers of methane. The Kyoto Agreement on Climate Change has put the move to sustainable farming practices way up on its list of priorities, but Australia has done little to address these issues.

So far there has been large amounts of money put aside for Landcare through the National Heritage Trust, and money has also been allocated to address salinity, but both these measures are like trying to put a band-aid on a broken arm when you are still

being beaten up. They do not address the cause of the problems, and they do not even come close to dealing with the symptoms.

If the government were really serious about sustainable agriculture they would put in place financial incentives to facilitate the rapid and whole scale conversion to organic farming, and accompany this strategy with well-timed consumer education campaigns and how-to literature.

In the UK, where financial incentives are in place and a ministry for organic conversion has been established, more than 1,100 farmers signed up for conversion in 1999 alone. Over 24 million pounds was allocated to farmers and over 75,000 hectares in England converted to organic farming. Previous to this, only 400 farmers went organic over a five-year period. According to the Lycos Environmental News Service "The UK's Soil Association estimates that demand in the UK for organic food is growing by more than 40 percent a year and much of Europe is following the same trend."

Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Cuba, along with many other nations around the world, are all taking active steps to promote organic agriculture. In socialist Cuba, green manure crops are being incorporated into crop rotations, municipal garbage and other waste products are being composted and the industrial-scale production of high-quality

humus using earthworms is being undertaken; this in a country previously known for its conventional, high production approach to agriculture.

So why is the Australian Government not following suit? Could it be that multinational agricultural chemical producers are a wealthier, and thus more influential, lobby group than the small group of environmentalists pushing for sustainable farming? And have environmentalists perhaps failed to see this as an important issue in shadow of the seemingly more pressing issues of old growth forest logging and uranium mining?

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Farming Methods Risk Food Production

New education policy - extolling 'the virtues of free trade'

ALEX KELLY

On February 6th Minister for Trade Mark Vaile, and Mike Moore, Chief of the World Trade Organisation, unilaterally announced a new education policy for the Australian public. The policy - "Exporting for the Future" is fuelled by concerns of an apparent lack of understanding in the Australian community regarding the benefits of free trade. The "multi-tiered" program is designed to demonstrate the contribution trade makes to "jobs and living standards ... [demonstrating] the importance of open trade". Vaile asserts that the program will target "existing school curricula" through prepared "teaching and learning resources".

When addressing the World Economic Forum in September last year Federal Treasurer Peter Costello claimed that the benefits of an open trading system were "not very well understood at all" and argued that the views of citizens were "not as

advanced as those of the policy makers". The groundswell in opposition to the free trade agenda is likely to have triggered this latest attempt to encourage trade liberalism. Acts of opposition - from the now common acronyms indicating global days of action; n30; s11; m1; to the dismantling of a McDonalds store in France; to the establishment of the World Social Forum groups around the world - are suggesting that the public feel alienated, not privileged, by this global economic trend.

Rob Derbridge, General Secretary of the Australian Education Union, expressed concern that such a policy directed at the education system would see bodies such as AUSTRADE and the WTO, rather than the education department, determining school's curriculum.

Senior economics journalist at Business Review Weekly, David James suggests that the whole nature of trade has changed to such an extent that a massive shift in the very

understanding of the meaning of trade is necessary. He cites the fact that half of what is referred to as trade globally is actually shipments within the same company; and argues that traditional understandings of trade - between nation states - are increasingly redundant.

Earnest Roddeck of the Society of Australian Industry and Employment suggests that the political leaders have "never been involved with the practical side of trade" and believes that they formulate trade policy "based on books". Mr Roddeck is concerned about the potential impact of free trade on Australian industry and fears that this education policy will "extol the virtues of free trade as being the universal solution". He suggests that if such an education policy is to be undertaken it must give equal space to alternative economic theories rather than focusing on the currently popular neo-liberal approach.

Neo-liberal theory is the economic ideology driving current economic



Jalozai refugee Camp, near Peshawar, Pakistan. Nadeem Yaqub reports on page 3

policy trends and global trading systems. However, the world economy has been governed by many different theories over time and whilst any civic education regarding Australia's global relations is to be valued, the agenda should be one of open dialogue and diversity, not simply be limited to the dominant theory of the day.

Mike Moore's tour to drum up support and 'understanding' of the WTO comes as the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) begins its series of public hearing investigating Australia's relationship with the WTO. JSCOT meets in Melbourne on 26th-27th April.

WorldBriefs

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(FAO) found. "Most of the world's fishing areas have apparently reached their maximum potential for capture, with the majority of stocks being fully exploited," the report warns. The FAO notes that future increases in fish consumption will have to be met by fish farming, as most wild fish stocks cannot support additional fishing. At least nine to ten percent of the world's marine fish populations are depleted, or recovering from depletion, the report finds. Another 15 to 18 percent are overexploited, and 47 to 50 percent are fully exploited, the FAO says. Since 1961, demand for fish has been growing at twice the rate of human population growth. If that growth rate continues, it can only be met by boosting the yield from fish farms, the FAO has found. Fish farming, combined with more efficient use of wild caught fish, could be a crucial tactic in meeting the food needs of a growing human population. (www.fao.org)

The Terrorism Act
Feb 19 - The new United Kingdom Terrorism Act will be implemented, despite widespread condemnation of the legislation by human rights groups, who are claiming that it removes fundamental liberties. The new Act provides for new definitions of terrorism including "serious violence against property for an ideological cause", "seriously disrupting an electronic system", and belonging to a banned organisation. The Act has widely been described as a redefinition of protest and dissent as acts of terrorism. Even wearing a T-Shirt with the motives of a foreign liberation movement may lead to a prison sentence. Unsurprisingly, government ministers are excluded from the Act.

Weekly vigils begin at Maribyrnong

CARLENE WILSON

In the middle of suburban Melbourne, not far from Highpoint Shopping Centre, is a place that doesn't seem to belong. Maribyrnong Detention Centre - an ugly and obtrusive reminder of Australia's controversial Immigration policies. The people at Maribyrnong are not criminals, they have broken no laws except to arrive in this country without paper work. They are asylum seekers. They are refugees.

There are many groups that have been working towards justice for refugees - the newest is the Melbourne group No One is Illegal - a culmination of members from various action groups around the city, among them the Refugee Action Collective (RAC).

Andrea, a representative from the collective says the diversity of groups involved on the issue is one of its strengths - lots of groups mean everyone can be involved at their own level.

She was one of the people who organized the rooftop occupation only a few weeks ago. A small group of demonstrators occupied the roof for several hours before voluntarily coming down. During the demonstration occupiers, supporters and the people detained inside, all chanted together.

So far there have been no repercussions - no summons delivered. The

Paving the planet: cars and crops compete for land

LESTER R. BROWN

As the new century begins, the competition between cars and crops for cropland is intensifying. Until now, the paving over of cropland has occurred largely in industrial countries, home to four fifths of the world's 520 million automobiles. But now, more and more farmland is being sacrificed in developing countries with hungry populations, calling into question the future role of the car.

Millions of hectares of cropland in the industrial world have been paved over for roads and parking lots. Each U.S. car, for example, requires on average 0.07 hectares (0.18 acres) of paved land for roads and parking space. For every five cars added to the U.S fleet, an area the size of a football field is covered with asphalt.

More often than not, cropland is paved simply because the flat, well-drained soils that are well suited for farming are also ideal for building roads. Once paved, land is not easily reclaimed. As environmentalist Rupert Cutler once noted, "Asphalt is the land's last crop."

The United States, with its 214 million motor vehicles, has paved 6.3 million kilometers (3.9 million miles) of roads, enough to circle the Earth at the equator 157 times. In addition to roads, cars require parking space. Imagine a parking lot for 214 million cars and trucks. If that is too difficult, try visualizing a parking lot for 1,000 cars and then imagine what 214,000 of these would look like.

However we visualize it, the U.S. area

devoted to roads and parking lots covers an estimated 16 million hectares (61,000 square miles), an expanse approaching the size of the 21 million hectares that U.S. farmers planted in wheat last year. But this paving of land in industrial countries is slowing as countries approach automobile saturation. In the United States, there are three vehicles for every four people. In Western Europe and Japan, there is typically one for every two people.

In developing countries, however, where automobile fleets are still small and where cropland is in short supply, the paving is just getting underway. More and more of the 11 million cars added annually to the world's vehicle fleet of 520 million are found in the developing world. This means that the war between cars and crops is being waged over wheat fields and rice paddies in countries where hunger is common. The outcome of this conflict in China and India, two countries that together contain 38 percent of the world's people, will affect food security everywhere.

Car-centered industrial societies that are densely populated, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan, have paved an average of 0.02 hectares per vehicle. And they have lost some of their most productive cropland in the process. Similarly, China and India also face acute pressure on their cropland base from industrialization. Although China covers roughly the same area as the United States, its 1.3 billion people are concentrated in just one third of the country--a thousand-mile strip

Australia is racist."

Its also important to have a media presence, keep eyes on the detention centres and draw in some of the immigrant community in the area who are very scared at the moment because many are only on temporary visas. Fear is a recurring theme. People in the detention centre are afraid to speak out - six of those who witnessed the death of Viliami Tanginoa three weeks ago have since been deported.

One concern of the campaign was that they might succeed in closing Maribyrnong but that people would just be moved to the large rural centers, some of which lock up over 2000 people. But Andrea points out that Maribyrnong is needed where it is because it is where people are deported from. All the same the focus of the campaign is to close all detention centres, nationwide.

No One is Illegal meet on the first Saturday of the month in the Evatt Room, Trades Hall.

Weekly vigils begin this Sunday (25th): 11.30am - 2pm, 53 Hampsted Rd, Maidstone (near Highpoint Shopping Centre)

Melways: map 27, ref 10h

For more information contact Andrea Ph. 0403 483 595
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on the eastern and southern coast where the cropland is located.

If China were one day to achieve the Japanese automobile ownership rate of one car for every two people, it would have a fleet of 640 million, compared with only 13 million today. While the idea of such an enormous fleet may seem farfetched, we need only remind ourselves that China has already overtaken the United States in steel production, fertilizer use, and red meat production. It is a huge economy and, since 1980, also the world's fastest growing economy.

Assuming 0.02 hectares of paved land per vehicle in China, as in Europe and Japan, a fleet of 640 million cars would require paving nearly 13 million hectares of land, most of which would likely be cropland. This figure is over one half of China's 23 million hectares of rice land, part of which it double crops to produce 135 million tons of rice, the principal food staple. When farmers in south-

The texts of these negotiations and preliminary drafts of the agreement are not available to the public, but more than 500 corporations have access to the documentation and seats at the negotiating table. The profoundly secretive and undemocratic manner in which this proposal is unfolding suggests that those involved know they wouldn't otherwise get away with it.

The Summit of the Americas is an annual meeting of the 34 Heads of State and their trade ministers. This year it is being held in Quebec City, Canada on the 20th and 21st of April. Although the Summit will not be ratifying FTAA this year, it is the body which will present the treaty at the time of implementation, should it go ahead.

From the 16th to the 22nd of April there will be a convergence of tens of thousands of people on Quebec City. They are gathering to voice their opposition to FTAA, Plan Columbia and a free trade agenda that pushes for profits at the expense of everything else. There are dozens of events planned which include the People's Summit (www.peoplesummit.org), various teach-ins, lectures and conferences, festivals, music, art exhibits, parties and days of protest and direct action on the 20th (www.quebec2001.net) and the 21st (www.oqp2001.org). An International Day of Action has been called by Native Forest Network for the 19th (Northern Hemisphere) and 20th (Southern Hemisphere), focussing on free trade's effects on forests (www.nativeforest.org)

FTAA takes the most liberalised initiatives from NAFTA together with the WTO GATS (World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade and Services), and throws in elements from the previously tabled MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) - which allows corporations to sue national or local governments for upholding legislation that inhibits their plans for profit, and even "potential profit".

FTAA is set to be implemented by

ern China lose a hectare of double-cropped riceland to the automobile, their rice production takes a double hit. Even one car for every four people, half the Japanese ownership rate, would consume a substantial area of cropland.

The situation in India is similar. While India is geographically only a third the size of China, it too has more than 1 billion people, and it now has 8 million motor vehicles. Its fast-growing villages and cities are already encroaching on its cropland. Add to this the land paved for the automobile, and India, too, will be facing a heavy loss of cropland. A country projected to add 515 million more people by 2050 cannot afford to cover valuable cropland with asphalt for roads and parking lots.

There is not enough land in China, India, and other densely populated countries like Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, and Mexico to

Continued page 4

Free Trade Agreement set to extend its boundaries

LOUISE SCORPION

On January 1st, 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into affect, creating a free trade zone between Mexico, the USA and Canada. As it happened, this was also the day the Zapatista rebels rose up in Chiapas, Mexico, because, as they see it, NAFTA is a "death sentence for the indigenous people".

Since 1994, more than 200,000 people in the US have lost their jobs because industry has been moving to Mexico where workers earn around 40 per cent less than they did before NAFTA and work in sweat shop conditions. We have also witnessed the mass destruction of forest habitat and the disintegration of environmental protection throughout the region. In short, NAFTA has been a profit explosion for big corporations and disastrous for the environment, workers, food safety and human rights in general.

Now the big guns have a new NAFTA in the works: the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). FTAA will stretch from the Arctic Circle to Patagonia, encompassing 34 countries (excluding Cuba) and 800 million people. But FTAA will not only expand NAFTA geographically; it will open the doors for corporations to trade in previously uncharted areas including - to name a few - bulk drinking water, municipal sanitation systems, public schools, prisons, health care and social security.

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Welcome to Edition Six

The initial idea behind the Paper was to provide a more open and diverse media space, where view points were not tainted by editorial intervention. A space where people could, if an argument was well founded and expressed - not reactionary, but an act of information in itself - be almost certain of publication. Early on we made it very clear that the Paper was not adverse to argument, that if someone disagreed with the way in which an issue was presented, they could write in response and express their own take on that issue.

This last edition of 'The Paper' has inspired our first in-depth response to an article. 'A further discussion on identity' (page 4) was submitted by Rob Dilley in response to Ben Cittadini's 'A discussion on identity' (edition five).

Thanks for your ideas Rob, hopefully your submission will signal the beginning of a culture of direct-response. The Paper welcomes a diversity of view points, and would like to encourage others to submit their own alternative take on issues. We want to maintain that The Paper is not aligned to any one point-of-view or political agenda. We do however, attempt to give space to issues that are ignored or misrepresented by corporate press.

Hope you like the new look!
(Thanks heaps Adrian)

Marni Cordell

ONLINE MEDIA SITES

www.melbourne.indymedia.org
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www.thepaper.org.au

'Donor Fatigue' leaves Afghani refugees in the cold

NADEEM YAQUB

PESHAWAR, Pakistan:
February 18th, 2001

Najeeba Bibi looks at the face of her five-month-old baby sleeping in her lap. The morning sun is the only comfort she and the sick child have enjoyed in the last few months. She sits in front of the green tent that is her home. Made of plastic sheeting, it is one amongst a sea of tents at the Jalojai Refugees Camp in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, where thousands of Afghani refugees have taken refuge during the last few months.

The mother of three accompanied her husband and children to the camp in early November, fleeing drought and hunger in her village in the Kapisa province of Afghanistan. "We came to Pakistan because we thought our kids will have food to eat but now we regret. There is no water, no tent, no food and no warm clothes," says her husband, 34-year-old Ishaq Jan. The children have fallen sick because of cold.

He is not the only one who had the impression they would be better off in Pakistan. A doctor at the local clinic, Dr. Mazhar Khan, estimates that 300 patients are treated daily: "every refugee family has brought an ill adult and a minor." He said throat and eye infections, pneumonia and diarrhoea were common among the children. If a plague broke out there would be a major disaster.

But illness is not the only concern of the 60,000 Afghans living at the makeshift camp of Jalojai. There is not enough food or rations to live on. Children have no milk. Those who have food do not have fuel to cook it. Food, provided by philanthropists and some humanitarian groups, is cooked in a combined cooking facility and distributed.

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) standards, each individual should have 25 litres of water daily for use. At Jalojai, now referred to as the "living graveyard", there is only one litre of water per head. The sanitation facilities are next to nil. One



A 'burqa-clad' Afghan woman, carrying her sick baby, waits to see the doctor at the clinic in Jalojai.

public (pit) toilet is to suffice the inhabitants of 30 tents.

The refugees gather around every car that enters the camp, in the hope of getting some relief. On February 17th they thought their prayers have been answered as a convoy of more than 20 vehicles arrived, raising clouds of dust. UN Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Kenzo Oshima had come to assess gravity of the situation himself. Oshima visited the camp to raise awareness regarding the problem of Afghan refugees. "I have come here to give voice to the sufferings of the victims. These people are victims of conflict and drought in Afghanistan." He urged that fighting must stop in Afghanistan.

He expressed his appreciation toward Pakistan for accepting Afghan refugees over the last two decades. Pakistan still houses around 2.5 million Afghans, 500,000 of whom live in the urban centers of NWFP.

Over the years Afghans have set up businesses, educational institutions, a carpet industry, restaurants, shops; and have integrated socially. Unlike refugees in many other parts of the world, Afghans in Pakistan are not restricted to their camps.

Since September, the UNHCR estimates that some 170,000 new refugees have arrived in Pakistan. So far 65,000 refugees have been moved from the makeshift camp to a more organized Shamshatu camp near Peshawar.

The fresh influx began some five months back when effects of severe drought in the last 30 years began to take toll on the shattered country. The UN estimates that 12 million of Afghanistan's 22 million people are affected by the drought, up to four million of them seriously.

But now the Pakistan government is saying enough is enough. Over the years "donor fatigue" has set in amongst the international communi-

ty, and most countries have turned their attention, and aid dollars, toward refugees in other parts of the world. For the first time in 22 years Pakistan sealed its borders with Afghanistan in November last year, and slapped a ban on the entry of fresh refugees. It introduced strict security measures along the 2200 kilometre-long border with Afghanistan. During the last month, police in NWFP arrested hundreds of Afghans having no valid travel documents or refugee cards and deported them, sending clear signals that the regime will not budge on its stand.

The change of heart on the part of the government in Pakistan has created problems for UNHCR as well. With the new Shamshatu camp filled to its capacity, the agency wants to set up a new camp for shifting refugees from Jalojai, but the government is reluctant to give permission. Governor NWFP Lt. Gen. Iftekhar Hussain Shah in a categorical statement said recently, "we can't afford to have more camps. Most of the Afghans who want to cross over to Pakistan are mainly economic refugees. The UN should set up camps inside Afghanistan in the peaceful areas and we are ready to provide all the assistance they need."

Commissioner for Afghan refugees in NWFP, Naeem Khan, informed that there is no capacity to accommodate more refugees in camps in the province. New camps are not possible, he added. "The last option left is to set up camps in Afghanistan."

However, UNHCR officials argue its mandate is to help refugees, and not Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). It is also faced with funds shortage. UN officials will present their report to the donor agencies next week.

In Jalojai, nine deaths due to cold and diseases have so far been reported during the last one-and-half months. By the time the international community responds it may be too late and many more may not survive the harsh and inhuman conditions.

Nadeem Yaqub is a freelance journalist based in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Regional Qld rejects Liberal dominated social/economic policies...for what?

HARRY HANSARD

Political commentators may be disappointed to discover that not everyone in regional Queensland is a One Nation voter, yet.

Traditionally, the area in and around Toowoomba on the Darling Downs has returned the most conservative of National Party members to state Parliament year after year, with just an occasional flirtation with an ALP member.

However, Saturday's election saw the Coalition vote decimated as voters across the state rejected not only the National Party, but also the Liberal Party and Howard's social and economic policies.

In Toowoomba there was intense bitterness surrounding the Liberal candidate for Cunningham, Peter Rookas, and his National Party opponent, Stuart Copeland.

Rookas ran a classic born-to-rule

style campaign emphasising his thirty-two years in the area which, he felt, should be qualification enough to get elected.

The local paper, The Chronicle, ran an editorial against Cunningham's retiring member of twenty-seven years, National Tony Elliott, with a title at the top and an empty box below with no text other than an explanation it was not a printing error.

This editorial stunt is symptomatic of the coverage the paper is known for. What, a reasonable reader might ask themselves, has the paper been doing for all those years? Hasn't it too played a part in allowing an MP to remain unchallenged?

The local media managed to protect incumbents from challenge by never contesting any of the policies put forward by candidates. This ensured readers/listeners were left to make their judgement on very limited

amounts of information, which in turn, played into the ALP's hands with their statewide focus on Beattie rather than policy content.

The media's failure to examine policy issues could not save National's Graham Healy, Toowoomba North. Healy has been dumped from Parliament in a surprise result for Kerry Shine, ALP. Shine boasts openly of having once been a member of the DLP (Democratic Labour Party) and he is known to be associated with the extreme right wing union, the Australian Workers Union.

One Nation enjoys more coverage and credit from the media than it is entitled to.

Voters are fed up with the social and economic policies of the major political parties whose leaders seem unprepared to accept any responsibility for either the rise of One Nation or the social dislocation many suffer.

Howard in particular seems oblivious

to the suggestion he has caused damage during his two terms.

Beazley has reinvented himself, forgetting he was once part of the team who so readily exposed Australia to competition without taking any steps to organise a relevant social policy to alleviate the undesirable aspects of structural change.

These two leaders are primarily responsible for the rise and continuation of One Nation, aided and abetted by a lazy, conservative, media and a change-worn electorate.

Down the range from Toowoomba, One Nation has won back Lockyer from their once member, Peter Prenzler, who defected to the break-away group CCA (Country City Alliance) following Hanson's trouble with One Nation registration.

Lockyer is an intensely conservative area. A one-seat win for One Nation here, out of this area's seven seats, is not a good result for Hanson and

must not be interpreted as such.

Sadly, Beattie's comment on Saturday night that he wants to retain the new first time ALP voters means Hanson's policies will have an impact on future policy settings as the ALP becomes more rightwing to accommodate their new Coalition chums.

Should Horan become the new National Party leader with his slogan, 'Strong and Sure', there will be no thorough examination of National policies, rather a base attempt to win back support which will ensure another unchallenged lurch to the right.

One Nation doesn't have to win seats when our political leaders are content to abandon their leadership role and borrow the simplistic notions currently on offer rather than dealing with the many and varied issues of exploitation that fuel our economy so successfully.

A further discussion on identity

In response to 'A discussion on identity', The Paper, Edition Five

ROB DILLEY

Ben sits on the balcony with his friend (herein referred to as our friend) and sips beer as a group of Indians play cricket in a car park below. The article goes on to sketch a discussion under the heading of "identity" that in fact enters the domain of racism. I want to make a range of points about this article that I feel are lost in the flow of the story.

The Indians in Ben Cittadini's story play cricket, yet Ben's friend claims that migrants come here not wanting to embrace the flag and the culture of Australia. There is an inherent contradiction in this opening comment that bespeaks the very stupidity and lazy mindedness from which racism grows.

To dismiss the past as not being relevant is the first act of a cultural traitor and the last step into the smaller mind-set of the racist. History is the informant of the future and the foundation on which humanity drags itself further from the primeval. Ignoring the past is always easier

when one can quote a fatherly epithet such as "when in Rome..." It reduces the ability to think, indeed it constricts, even strangles the necessity to grapple with a complex issue such as multiculturalism. Comfy one-liners which distil an opinion - and I stress opinion - into an easily digestible notion is the intellectual equivalent of junk food. It is in effect the McDonalds of the mind. And no common splashing in the sea and marvelling at the scenery is going to eradicate the deep-rooted hatred that Ben's friend tries so limply to veil.

One-liners combined with uncritical analysis and scant regard for historical circumstance colour exactly the kind of resentment and misunderstanding that our friend displays.

"What we have now is all these people..." Just a second, "now"? Migration is not a recent incident. People have been coming to this continent since its invasion and settlement over two hundred years ago. More than 30 per cent of the population is migrant - directly migrant - and their children make up an even vaster section of the general community. When our friend sees Indians playing cricket and doesn't recognise that they are playing a game that we also play, he exposes his desire to dominate. He does not see them as fellow cricket players with which to share a game, but as an opportunity to exert his (supposed) dominance. He doesn't want to play with them, he wants to play against them and,

most crucially, he wants to defeat them. While he complains that "people from other countries... don't want to live like we do..." he neatly ignores the fact that the Indians are playing cricket. Remember cricket? A national sport I believe.

This hypocrisy is an excellent example of a racist not wanting to dissect his own rhetoric. Racists will so often move the argument around by switching the topic, changing the basis of a debate and never allowing any real analysis of their ideas. Sound familiar? Above all they resent change and above all they refuse point blank to change themselves. If One Nation publishes its policies, I hope our friend reads them in detail. He may find himself. He may find exactly the same simplistic arguments staring back at him, voiced in the same tone of incoherent indignation.

Division in race and culture is not due to "selfish migrants holding on to their homelands." It is a result of people who cannot appreciate the benefits of a pluralistic culture; people who want to go back to the fifties when migrants were oppressed, invisible and dismissed as wogs. There is no division in race for we are all one race: the human race. I think it was Nelson Mandela who pointed out that "race" is a racist term. Cultures are dynamic and adaptable. Culture is nothing more and nothing less than the assimilation of change (and technology) that enables us to grow from tribal chaos in to sophisticated,

adaptable societies. Mono-cultural societies are dying societies. Culture thrives on diversity, not on conquest.

Ben's attempt to end his story with a cosy tale of personal consolation by looking to the here and now - "but that maybe it is where we are that we shall always be" - is indeed a tragic and misbegotten ideal. It at once suggests that we shall always be in the midst of upheaval and conflict over identity. Or is he suggesting that we are comfortable right now? At ease with our situation? Surely not. "That it is not from whence we came that we shall be returning..." well Ben, I think we may be headed back to the fifties, especially if you dare to suggest that where we are is "where we shall always be."

This confirms Ben's own reluctance to deal with the historical dysfunction of his friend. It's also another indication of how intense the pressure can be on writers of all genres to have a happy ending. There is no happy ending when one deals with contemporary culture. There is no cosy middle ground. When writing about culture and identity there is only a road which stretches ever onwards and the less we choose to deal with it the more potholes we will find ourselves falling into. Wrestle with the topic but don't water it down to common experience of landscape. Admire the mountains by all means, but don't take your eyes off the road.

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support automobile-centered transportation systems and to feed their people. The competition between cars and crops for land is becoming a competition between the rich and the poor, between those who can afford automobiles and those who struggle to buy enough food.

Governments that subsidize an automobile infrastructure with revenues collected from the entire population are, in effect, collecting money from the poor to support the cars of the wealthy. In subsidizing the development of an auto-centered transport system, governments are also inevitably subsidizing the paving of cropland. If, as now seems likely, automobile ownership never goes beyond the affluent minority in developing countries, this becomes an ongoing and largely invisible transfer of income from the poor to the rich.

In a land-hungry world, the time has come to reassess the future of the automobile, to design transportation systems that provide mobility for entire populations, not just affluent minorities, and that do this without threatening food security. When Beijing announced in 1994 that it planned to make the auto industry one of the growth sectors for the next few decades, a group of eminent scientists--many of them members of the National Academy of Sciences--produced a white paper challenging this decision. They identified several reasons why China should not develop a car-centered transport system, but the first was that the country did not have enough cropland both to feed its people and to provide land for the automobile.

The team of scientists recommended that instead of building an automobile infrastructure of roads and parking lots, China should concentrate on developing state-of-the-art light rail systems augmented by buses and bicycles. This would not only provide mobility for far more people than a congested auto-centered system, but it would also protect cropland.

There are many reasons to question the goal of building automobile-centered transportation systems everywhere, including climate change, air pollution, and traffic congestion. But the loss of cropland alone is sufficient. Nearly all of the 3 billion people to be added to the current world population of 6 billion by mid-century will be born in developing countries where there is not enough land to feed everyone and to accommodate the automobile. Future food security now depends on restructuring transportation budgets--investing less in highway infrastructure and more in rail and bicycle infrastructure.

More info at: www.worldwatch.org

Fight for Merri Creek continues

DOMENICA SETTLE

Two giant frogs and 45 people met at a tram stop on St Georges Road, Melbourne, on February 11th, before boarding a tram for Planning and Health Minister John Thwaites' office. The other passengers looked a little perplexed, until someone got out the megaphone.

"We've been trying and trying to get a meeting with Thwaites," explained the man in the frog boxer shorts, "but it seems he's a little shy. So we're going down to his office to ask if he'll be the Growling Grass Frog's valentine."

The action organisers, Friends of Merri Creek, have been campaigning for years now to stop the proposed Hume Freeway from being put in parallel to the Hume Highway, along sections of the Merri Creek. Those sections include native grasslands: a colony of the endangered Growling Grass Frog.

"The Bracks government promised to have consultation with the community when it affected their community", explained spokesperson Norma Willoughby, "and no, we haven't been able to get a meeting, so we haven't been able to discuss this issue."

After renditions of "Galooph Went the Little Green Frog Last Night" and other frog songs, the protesters marched off the tram in South Melbourne, to Thwaites' office. The two giant frogs symbolically died, while a plethora of chalk messages was left across the footpath for Thwaites' return on Monday.

Friends of Merri Creek, who have



Melbourne's waterways: to face further damage from industrialisation

support from the Moreland, Yarra and Darebin city councils, argue that the alternatives to the new freeway are upgrading the current road, putting in place decent interchanges, and encouraging and putting into place decent public transport for the outer Northern suburbs. Willoughby also points out the train line that runs parallel to the present highway, arguing that more freight could easily be moved to rail.

Thwaites is currently considering an Advisory Committee report on the proposed freeway. While the action was optimistic, protestors are aware that not only has Thwaites reap-

pointed the same Advisory Committee that recommended the freeway under Kennett, but also the terms of reference of their report have already excluded the alternatives to the freeway that they believe are necessary.

"When there's an alternative, and a sensible alternative," said a frustrated Willoughby "there's no need to destroy the creek."

Friends of Merri Creek can be found at: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fomc/>

ph: (03) 9240 2394

Environmentalists increasingly the targets of violence in Columbia

Last week seven environmentalists on a trip to the Purace National Park were found dead by the highway. Two weeks ago another environmentalist working for Sierra Nevada was also killed. According to Cam Walker of Friends of the Earth Melbourne, at least ten indigenous anti-oil blockaders have been slain in the last year. The issue has not seen a lot of publicity in the international press, despite the shocking nature of these deaths. Walker muses that environmentalism is often seen as 'first world tree hugging' and that people seldom realise the risks activists in other nations take.

It is extremely difficult, and often dangerous, for groups to speak out about such incidents, or to even begin to speculate on the identity of the perpetrators. Many such crimes go unsolved. Hildebrando Vélez, Director of Friends of the Earth Columbia is urging people to contact the Columbia President: Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango Presidente de la República Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia Fax: + 571 287 7939, + 571 284 2186, + 571 289 3377 or + 571 337 1351 Salutation: Dear President /Excmo. Sr. Presidente

For more information see www.columbia.indymedia.org